

**Metropolitan Homelessness Full Commission Meeting**  
Friday, July 8, 2016  
at the Sonny West Conference Center, Howard Office Building  
700 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South

**Present:** Liz Allen Fey, Kirby Davis, Wendell Segroves, Renee Pratt, Jim Harbison, Erik Cole, Charles Strobel, Metro Police Representative Ricky Bearden, Mary Roberts, Mina Johnson, Marvin Cox, Tom Turner, Phil Duke, Dayna Lovelady, Freddie O'Connell, Ellen Zinkiewicz, Tanaka Vercher

**Staff:** William Connelly, Karri Simpson, Lesley Head, Deon Trotter

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

**Minutes:**

The minutes from the May 6, 2016 Metropolitan Homelessness Commission meeting were approved.

**Financials and Budget**

Will Connelly stated that the new fiscal year has begun. Last fiscal year approximately 1.5 million was from Metro general fund and 70% goes to contracts with homeless services providers, with 25% going toward 4 staff members (the Hospital to Homes coordinator Budget was moved to the Homelessness Commission budget for this new fiscal year). Current contracts are with the Room in the Inn for day center, guest house, and cold weather coordination; Centerstone for 6 housing retention specialists; Park Center for 3 SOAR coordinators; a federal contract with the VISTA program for four VISTA workers who this year will be at Safe Haven and Catholic Charities; and Focus Strategies. Funds are also spent on the HMIS database. Grant funded areas are separate from the general fund, and through grants and donations, over \$600,000 was added this past fiscal year. This included the CABHI grant for outreach staff at Park Center and CTI caseworkers at Mental Health Cooperative, donations to help cover move-in costs, funds from foundations such as Boulevard Bolt, and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to reimburse for move-in costs. CDBG was expended this past year and the Commission is working with MDHA to get a new grant fund this fiscal year.

Freddie O'Connell asked if any administrative fee is taken from How's Nashville donations. Will Connelly stated no, all funds go toward move-in costs.

Collaboration College grant funding was awarded to the Metro Homelessness Commission after submitting the idea for hospital to homes, which connects the hospital system to housing and social services.

Mina Johnson asked about how bus passes are utilized. Will Connelly stated that they were purchased during the cold weather season however outreach workers distribute them.

Internal service fees are fees paid by each department to cover computers, phones, IT support, etc.

Commissioners would like to know how many people have been helped through funding, as well as how many people who have moved in received How's Nashville funding assistance.

The 2017 budget doesn't look very different than 2016. \$75,000 is being received to match a new federal grant just awarded to the Metro Homelessness Commission to fund a homeless outreach team. \$6,000 was also given for rent for additional office space.

## **Focus Strategies Report Discussion**

Liz Allen Fey stated the Mayor has accepted the recommendations approved by the Metro Homelessness Commission regarding the encampment task force.

Will Connelly stated that the report has a total of 6 recommendations. Of those 5 are system redesign recommendations, i.e. what time and money could be spent on, to get people into housing quicker. There was a 6<sup>th</sup> recommendation around governance and the report states that the other 5 recommendations are dependent on this one recommendation.

The governance recommendation states to establish a new unified governance and decision making structure entity. The single most important structure for Nashville is for the community leadership to come together and identify or create a single structure and lead entity that will be tasked with moving forward.

Liz Allen Fey stated the community has been operating with a collaborative mind set for the past several years, but Focus Strategies states that a collaborative mind set alone won't move the goal of ending homelessness forward. A single leadership entity needs to be defined.

Freddie O'Connell stated that he wants to know how the CoC plays a role in all this because he is unfamiliar.

Jim Harbison stated that CoC is the federally mandated organization to handle all the funding process through HUD. The CoC have been meeting for years and significant amount of funds go towards homeless services. MDHA is the lead agency because they have a close association with HUD but do not control who is funded. MDHA has applied for technical assistance to be a high performing CoC. Angie Hubbard stated the community has been involved in the request for technical assistance. Jim Harbison stated that no funding has been lost and that Nashville is in compliance with HUD.

Erik Cole stated the CoC Governance Committee was created 3-4 years ago at the request of the agencies that make up the CoC. The governance is the voting body that makes the recommendations regarding CoC funding. The governance committee is currently looking at the current bylaws and how they function. He feels a high level of coordination is needed between the CoC governance and Metro Homelessness Commission moving forward.

Discussion ensued around the recommendation and topics included:

- Moving toward a housing crisis resolution system is the goal; status quo isn't moving the needle toward ending homelessness.
- How do they lead coming together as a leadership body and what are the beliefs around homelessness were some themes of the discussion?
- What does the governance of the homelessness commission need to look like and who should be at the table?
- Does adopting this recommendation improve processes for individuals on the streets to help get them into housing?
- The current structure with the leadership bodies of the Commission and CoC are confusing. HUD has moved to a systems approach and is no longer looking at individual programs. Past collaboration has led to forward progress and increased funding and that would be a benefit of adopting this recommendation.

A motion to adopt the recommendation was made by Freddie O'Connell and seconded by Mary Roberts. The vote was unanimous in favor.

In anticipation of the Commission adopting this recommendation the executive committee had discussed creating a task force. Freddie O'Connell has agreed to chair this task force and the executive committee will ask Jim Harbison, Renee Pratt, Kirby Davis, Erik Cole, Angela Goddard, and Steve Samra to serve. Liz Allen Fey will join them for their first meeting because she believes that it is imperative they develop a list of beliefs around homelessness and that the task force will bring a set of recommendations back to the Commission at the November meeting.

## **Announcements**

Will Connelly thanked Karri Simpson for her work with the Commission and announced she is moving to NYC.

Will Connelly thanked everyone for coming to the youth homelessness event and stated that there is a lot of energy around "The Key Plan" to end youth homelessness. The plan has a lot of actionable items that the community will be working on over the next year.

Will Connelly stated that the Mayor agreed to start an interdepartmental task force, which was a recommendation made by the encampment task force. This will involve Metro department heads, as well as Mayor Barry, and will be led by him and Judy Tackett. One of the first discussions will be around creating an encampment response protocol. In addition the homeless outreach team will hopefully be hired in August.

Will Connelly and his wife, Eva, are expecting their first child this month.

At the most recent council meeting a measure to tackle affordable housing did pass its first reading. He encouraged that the Commission should look at what state the policy is in when the policy gets to the planning commission. Liz Allen Fey stated they could look at this policy proposal at the August executive committee meeting. Erik Cole stated his team could come make a presentation regarding affordable housing to the Commission if they'd like.

Angie Hubbard stated the HOME funding opportunity, through MDHA, application is opening today.

Will Connelly stated in May 2016 the Nashville community housed 123 people experiencing chronic and/or veteran homelessness.

## **Public Hearing**

John Zirker- Wants to extend an invitation to the homeless community to the NAACP meetings to help broaden their voice. If he was grading the Commission on being inclusive, he would give them an A+. He finds what he heard today exciting, but no real increase in homeless development. Skyscrapers are being built at an alarming rate and no money is coming down from these new developments for homeless and poor people. He is part of the resident's association at James Caycee and there aren't wrap around services for those who come into public housing. He says that Charles Strobel is the smartest man and he likes how Freddie O'Connell talks and asks he please look at the money on this upcoming task force.

Coyote: If the Mayor's office wants to send bulldozers to homeless encampments, then she can send them to the abandon buildings across Nashville. They are a minority. He congratulated Will Connelly on the upcoming birth on his son.

Name not given: Has there been any idea of Metro refurbishing housing for the homeless and saving some money?

- Mary Roberts responded that she has a dream for micro housing but there is no plan in the works.

Ms. Jones: She is a clinical case manager and says there is no state funding for when people are leaving the jails and didn't hear any budget item that addresses who she works with, including those on the sex offender registry and violent offenders. She has contacted Metro Social Services and couldn't get assistance and has tried at Room in the Inn. If funding could be designated for felons needing housing, it would be helpful.

- Renee Pratt apologized that she didn't receive a response from MSS and ask that she contact her directly to start a partnership.

Lauren Plummer: She wants to know about cuts to Tier 2 funding within the CoC and what that is and how much was cut.

- Angie Hubbard with MDHA stated she doesn't know how much was cut and will get that information. She stated that Tier 2 funding was lower performing community service projects that were cut from the CoC this year. Shelter plus care housing vouchers were cut through this; these vouchers were not being used in previous years.

Howard Allen: He thanked Karri Simpson and asked that she send information back from New York on how they are ending homelessness. He thinks the Commission is a D-. More Council members need to come out and speak with those experiencing homelessness. He congratulated Will Connelly on the upcoming birth of his first baby, but homelessness starts with babies and the community needs to be ending this. This is about control. \$150,000 for outreach workers should be used to hire homelessness individuals to work in these positions. He would like to see Wendell, who has been on the Commission for 3 years, in an apartment. It is sad they want another task force to just keep talking. They need to start with the comments from the community. The community needs to know where they can get a key to a house. Has anyone looked into the usage tax on crane's he mentioned at the last meeting? A real definition on affordable housing for the community is needed, because their definition isn't the same as those experiencing homelessness.

Denis Huey: He would like an update on Ft. Negley.

- Renee Pratt stated that almost everyone was housed from Ft. Negley. Over \$40,000 was spent on motel vouchers in the interim. They are still working with one couple to help them with housing, who have not cooperated up to this point. Of those who went to motels through MSS, all others were housed.

Denis thanked MSS and the mayor for that. He stated that today's meeting was a budget hearing, not a homelessness commission meeting. The encampment task force was formed around the same time that the Ft. Negley issue hit the fan. There were six weeks of meetings and at the end there was a watered down statement that the Mayor's office and city of Nashville has no responsibility to do anything. Ft. Negley was resolved and the next week the whole discussion around encampments ended with no permanent encampment.

- Will Connelly stated that the homeless outreach team and interdepartmental committee are both results of the task force. The recommendation was that the Homelessness Commission support efforts for private efforts to create interim encampments.

Denis wants to know the Mayor's position on permanent encampments.

- Will Connelly stated that he will have to ask the Mayor's office.
- Liz Allen Fey stated that there was a colocation of two things, both the closing of Ft. Negley and the encampment task force. The recommendations of the encampment task force were submitted to the Mayor and were accepted. The interdepartmental meeting was created and it is moving forward.

Denis continued to ask what the Mayor's position on permanent encampments is.

- Will Connelly stated that she has been clear about not supporting them on Metro Park's property. The recommendation was for the Commission to support the private efforts to create encampments on private land.

Steve Reiter: He is filing an open meeting complaint as there was no agenda put out and no notice put up.

- Will Connelly stated that notice was published last week.

Mary Roberts (Commissioner): She stated that when Howard Allen came to speak to Metro Council she cried and asked that Howard continue to come to the Commission meetings.

- Howard stated it has been a rough week with everything that has happened in Baton Rouge and Dallas and Nashville needs to stand together.

Samuel Lester: He thanked everyone for staying for public comments. They are important and a lot of good things come out of this time; if Erik Cole had stayed then maybe Denis's questions could have been answered. He has looked at the Focus Strategies report and sees some issues with it. He doesn't see leadership as the issue, but affordable housing. The report seems to only focus on those that are literally homeless, but those doubled up in hotels and apartments are a huge part of the homeless population. The PIT count inadequately represents the homeless population. The Commission really does need to make an effort to help reinforce the demands for affordable housing. The difference between being housed and unhoused is about \$21,000 per person, which includes emergency service, police efforts, and other community services. The Commission can make more of an effort to publicize this issue and support efforts of council members who are focused on affordable housing.

Liz Allen Fey asked the Commissioners what they heard in the public comment section. Their answers included:

- Mary Roberts: The community needs a tangible housing plan, not just more meetings.
- Tanaka Vercher: Frustration. Actions need to come together quicker and more of a sense of urgency from the Commissioners.
- Mina Johnson: They are tired of the Commission talking and that they need to do something quickly. She feels powerless because you can't make things happen at the snap of the finger, but she is going to take action.
- Tanaka Vercher added that while they are council members, they aren't here just to be here. They asked to be at this table because they wanted to be part of the solution.

Howard Allen (community member) said he has seen a lot of council members sit here and now one is the mayor.

Liz Allen Fey stated that she came into this seat knowing that a lot of reports have been given at this meeting but not a lot of action has been taken. The staff has taken action, but the Commissioners haven't. That is part of the new goal and part of it will be restructuring this Commission. If they need to change the structure of this meeting, they will; it's not about control, it is about respect. If they need to have meeting with the community outside of this meeting, then they will. She is asking the community to let them do that work and it can't be done overnight.

The next full Commission meeting is Friday, September 2, 2016 at 9:30 a.m. at the Sonny West Conference room in the Howard Office Building.

The next Executive Committee meeting is on Tuesday, August 9, 2016 at 8:30 a.m. at Metro Social Services, 800 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North.

With no other comments the meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.